

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05 SS-15 ARA-10

INR-10 SP-02 NSC-05 L-03 AID-05 /091 W

-----116076 132343Z /20 L

R 120946Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5647

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACQA

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 2515

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 1152: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, BG, BM

SUBJECT: BURMA-BANGLADESH REFUGEE AGREEMENT

REF: (A) DACCA 4290; (B) STATE 161517

1. EMBASSY OFFICERS DISCUSSED THE REPORTED BURMA-BANGLADESH REFUGEE AGREEMENT WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY'S AMERICAN DIVISION ACTING DIRECTOR U TIN TUN ON JULY 11. THE BURMESE OFFICIAL STATED THE AGREEMENT PROVIDES THAT THREE CATEGORIES OF PERSONS COULD BE REPATRIATED: 1) DOCUMENTED BURMESE NATIONALS AND PERMANENT RESIDENTS, I.E., NATIONAL REGISTRATION CARD (NRC) HOLDERS AND FOREIGNERS REGISTRATION CARD (FRC) HOLDERS, THEIR IMMEDIATE FAMILIES AND IN-LAWS; 2) DISPLACED PERSONS WITH OTHER DOCUMENTS (I.E., LAND TITLES, SCHOOL CERTIFICATES, ETC.) PROVING THEY WERE FORMERLY RESIDING LEGALLY IN BURMA; AND 3) THOSE WITH NO DOCUMENTS WHO CAN PROVE FORMER LEGAL BURMESE RESIDENCE BY OTHER MEANS, SUCH AS RELIABLE WITNESSES, KNOWLEDGE OF BURMESE, CONFIDENTIAL

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ETC. (ALTHOUGH TIN TUN STATED THAT IN BURMA ALL QUALIFIED PERSONS OVER THE AGE OF 12 WERE ISSUED NRC AND FRC CERTIFICATES, OTHER RELIABLE SOURCES HAVE TOLD US THE ISSUANCE OF THESE DOCUMENTS HAD NOT BEEN STRICTLY IMPLEMENTED IN THE ARAKAN STATE SINCE 1962.)

2. U TIN TUN ESTIMATED THAT BURMA WOULD TAKE BACK AT LEAST

THREE-QUARTERS OF THOSE WHO ACTUALLY HAD FLED FROM THE ARAKAN STATE BUT EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM THAT ALL OF THE 200,000 PEOPLE IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS HAD COME FROM BURMA, ONCE RETURNED, HE SAID THEIR IMMIGRATION STATUS WOULD NOT BE SUBJECT TO FURTHER SCRUTINY. HE DID NOT KNOW THE MODALITIES THAT HAD BEEN WORKED OUT TO IMPLEMENT THE AGREEMENT.

3. ON JULY 12, THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PRESS REPORTED THAT THE REPATRIATION WOULD TAKE PLACE IN THREE PHASES, IN THE ORDER OF THE ABOVE-MENTIONED CATEGORIES. THE FIRST PHASE WILL COMMENCE AT THE END OF AUGUST 1978. WITHOUT GIVING DETAILS, THE PRESS ALSO REPORTED AGREEMENTS ON BORDER DEMARCATION, GROUND RULES FOR COMPLETING REPATRIATION, AND PREVENTING AND PROCESSING FUTURE ILLEGAL CROSSINGS.

4. COMMENT: THE PROGRESS THAT HAS BEEN MADE TO DATE TOWARDS A BILATERAL SOLUTION TO THE REFUGEE PROBLEM IS INDEED ENCOURAGING AND IN KEEPING WITH THE VIEWS EXPRESSED TO THE BURMESE ON JUNE 28. WE ARE AGREEABLY SURPRISED BY THE COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE DISPLAYED BY THE BURMESE SO FAR IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. GIVEN THE NATURE OF THE GUB, THIS CONCILIATORY LINE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN TAKEN WITHOUT DIRECT ORDERS FROM PRESIDENT NE WIN HIMSELF. WE CAN ONLY SPECULATE THAT SENSITIVITY TO ADVERSE INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY WAS THE PRIME MOTIVATION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEES, AGREEMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978RANGOO02515
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780288-0157
Format: TEL
From: RANGOON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780769/aaaacfug.tel
Line Count: 86
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 8ce07e76-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 DACCA 4290, 78 STATE 161517
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2034371
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BURMA-BANGLADESH REFUGEE AGREEMENT
TAGS: PBOR, BG, BM
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/8ce07e76-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014